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Book Review

Love's Confusions, C. D. C. Reeve. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005. Pp. xi + 203 (preface; no bibliography; acknowledgments; index). Cloth, \$23.95. ISBN 0-674-01711-0.

1. C. D. C. Reeve (David), professor of philosophy at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, is the author of, among many other articles and books in ancient philosophy, a clever essay in dialogue form, "Women" (on the *Republic*), and "Plato on Eros and Friendship," in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-friendship). It therefore comes as a surprise, and a disappointment, that Reeve has written a philosophically weak book on love and sex. This may be due, in part, to the fact that Plato, Aristotle, and other ancients are not the stars of *Love's Confusions*. They are eclipsed by numerous other and, to my mind, inferior writers in the humanities and social sciences. (There are, of course, exceptions.) The index's longest entry is for Freud (9 cites), so it is no coincidence that an eclectic psychoanalysis pervades the book. But the psychoanalysis is not especially deep. Reeve, as Lacan did, abruptly cuts off the session after earning his fee in eight and a half minutes.

2. Before getting to the themes of the book, I want to complain about one sentence. It comes early in the book; I found it offensive; it put me in a bad mood. I do not think, however, that it caused my overall assessment of *Love's Confusions* ("philosophically weak"). I will justify that assessment in due course.

After quoting Kant on the objectifying nature of sexual desire, and on how unification in marriage is the only way to overcome the objectification of sexual activity (from the *Vorlesung*), Reeve comments: "As you can tell, Kant never married and probably never had sex" (p. 8). This is a cheap shot. It is also pompous and self-congratulatory: "y'all can tell that *I've* had sex." We do not know anything about Kant's sex-life from the *Vorlesung*. It would be hubris to suggest the psychological thesis that anyone who writes what Kant did on sex must not know anything about sex, must be less experienced than an amateur. We *might* know that Kant never married and never had sex, but we would know it independently, not from the passage. Reeve's endnote to this sentence cites Manfred Kuehn's biography of Kant; hence what Reeve should have written is the proper "As Kuehn has concluded," not "As we can tell." Could I get away with writing: "After reading Reeve's book, we can tell that he probably hasn't been able to maintain a relationship for more than a few months; anyone who stayed longer than that would be bored to death"? You'd rightly reply: "Cheap shot. Self-righteous joke. Drawing that conclusion from the book is brainless psychology. If we want to know about Reeve's relationships, there are standard biographical routes." Further, many passages in St. Augustine's corpus (for example, *City of God*) express pretty much the same thoughts about the nastiness of sexual desire and sexual activity as Kant does. In Augustine's case, the pseudo-reasoning that underlies "as you can tell" leads us astray, in the wrong direction; we

know, on independent grounds (the *Confessions*), that he was sexually experienced. Indeed, let's turn Reeve on his head with some equally plausible psychologizing: anyone, such as Kant, who perceives so *accurately* the depravity of the sexual impulse (see, for another example, the critique of sexuality of the feminist legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon, although her diagnosis is not natural, metaphysical, or anthropological, but social) must have had lots of sexual experience. Sad to say, *Love's Confusions* is replete with other pieces of bad reasoning. ("As you can tell from Pope Paul VI's '*Humanae vitae*' [1968], this man has never had any sex" is, I admit, even less astute than Reeve's remark on Kant.)

3. I wish I could tell you in a few succinct sentences what *Love's Confusions* is about, but I find that impossible to do. The book is about too many things. In the preface, Reeve informs us what to expect only by referring us to the chapter titles: "the major thematic divisions of my story are revealed in the headings of the ten chapters" (viii). Here they are:

1. Agape, Eros, and the Will
2. Seeing, Improvising, and Self-Love
3. First Love and After
4. Anxiety and the Ethics of Intimacy
5. Jealousy, Perversity, and Other Liabilities of Love
6. Sentimentality and the Gift of the Self
7. Lebensraum, Desire, and the Envy of Eternity
8. Violence, Pornography, and Sadomasochism
9. Work and/as Love
10. Sex, Democracy, and the Future

It was hard for me to discern from these titles what would link the various sections together; that remained elusive even after I read *Love's Confusions*. In the book I found plenty of observations about sexual desire, love, falling in love, being in love, and so forth (some on the money, others not), but no central thesis or set of tightly connected theses emerges. The book is not a collection of aphorisms or paragraphs of remarks, as found in Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, although, given the frequent intrachapter subdivisions and the overwhelming number of passages Reeve quotes from other writers, the book often has the appearance of being a pastiche (in the original meaning) or collage. More precisely, the book is much like an anthology of an author's previously published articles in which the content of one chapter matches the book's title and the other essays are only loosely related to each other. The genre is well-known. (See, for example, Harry Frankfurt's *The Importance of What We Care About* [1988] and Thomas Nagel's *Concealment and Exposure and Other Essays* [2002].) *Love's Confusions*, however, is not composed of tried-and-true, previously published essays conveniently assembled within the same covers. Instead, the book is a string of short, separate, essays having little connection with each other, beyond being about love or sex, construed broadly. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud famously wrote—quoted approvingly by Reeve (p. 82)—"the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together."

4. Reeve does tie all the essays together with a common, albeit methodological, thread. In the preface, he tells us that one "preoccupation" of the book (there are others) "is with a style of philosophical thinking that is less a matter of analysis and argument than of genealogy, and of situating a target notion within the potentially most revelatory experiential and conceptual field" (p.

viii). I thought I knew what he was up to—until the Foucauldian “genealogy.” It is abundantly true, as Reeve concedes, that *Love's Confusions* lacks analytical rigor. This is not an asset, but detrimental to the book, frustrating its effort to be a serious contribution to the philosophy of love and sex. (I will provide examples.) The rest of the sentence is (to me, anyway) obscure. Reeve proceeds to explain, that is, to fill in the blanks: “In the case of love [the “target” notion], this [experiential and conceptual] field includes infantile experience, sentimentality, work, violence, perversion, and pornography.” There's the common thread, one that allows Reeve to herd into one sentence five words from the chapter titles. (Reeve has written the perfect country-western song, which refers to streetcars, cognac, capital punishment, a tire iron, Willie Nelson, and Lake Travis.) Reeve wants to “situate” love “within” a “field” consisting of perversion, babies, work, pornography, etc. I have no idea what this means. And reading the chapters on toddlers, jealousy, sexual perversion, and work did not help me figure out how love was being “situated” anywhere (other than at Hollywood and Vine or in the East Village). Does Reeve simply want to understand or illuminate love in relation to these various items? Is that the message of all that jargon? Even so, it seems strained. Take the chapter on pornography: What's love, the target notion, got to do with it, or it with love?

5. Here is one example of Reeve's discomfort with analysis. In the chapter “Jealousy, Perversity, and Other Liabilities of Love,” the closest Reeve gets to an analysis of “jealousy” is this: “To be jealous of someone . . . we typically have to think something like, 'He is getting love from my lover that I should be getting,' or 'He is a threat to the love that is rightly mine’” (p. 90). Reeve then points out that “if that is all jealousy amounts to in us, it is *hollow*.” There is much truth in the notion that there must be more: the affective dimension of jealousy must be given its due. Reeve speaks of this dimension as a “potent cocktail” (p. 80) that may include fear and anger, and, eventually, he locates the source of some of these feelings in the “infantile, alimentary” body and our awareness of it (pp. 90-91; this is Reeve's grand conclusion about jealousy as an emotion; it seems psychological, not philosophical). But if the cognitive component of jealousy is what Reeve says it is, what is the difference (a fine distinction) between jealousy and envy? This is not an idle question, for Reeve understands sexual perversion through envy, not jealousy. Quoting with approval George Crabb's *English Synonyms*, Reeve takes envy to be “pain . . . at seeing another have what it wants for itself” (p. 84). I discern no difference between that and Reeve on jealousy: feeling pain while, or as a result of, thinking “He is getting love from my lover that I should be getting.”

The people to read on jealousy and envy are Daniel Farrell for the analysis and Jerome Neu for the philosophical psychology. That Reeve ignores Farrell's essays (and the competent writings on the topic by Gabriele Taylor and Patricia Greenspan) is not terribly surprising, given all the other philosophers he ignores, but to ignore the excellent papers by Neu, a psychoanalytic sympathizer (see his *Cambridge Companion to Freud* [1991]), is plain perverse. Perhaps this criticism misses the mark, for *Love's Confusions* may not have been intended to be scholarly, else Reeve might have drawn upon Freud's “Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality” (1922). If not philosophers, at least Freud? Sure, Reeve quotes that one famous line from *Three Essays*, and this leads into his deliberations about sexual perversion. But while trying to understand perversion, Reeve again ignores everything philosophers have written about it (for example, Joseph Margolis, Thomas Nagel, Graham Priest, Igor Primoratz, Roger Scruton, and Michael Slote—no slouches), with the exception of a couple of throw-away quotes from the Foucauldian Arnold

Davidson. Further, Reeve declines to teach us anything about Freud's notion of sexual perversion, a juicy topic pondered with subtlety by Neu. If one begins a discussion of perversion, as Reeve does, by praising Freud's insight that in humans the sexual instinct and its various objects are “merely soldered together,” it would seem to be imperative to inquire where Freud went with that insight. Did he work it out consistently, scoring a touchdown? There are one or two sentences on this in *Love's Confusions*, and one is not Reeve's but a tidbit he culled from the psychoanalyst Donald Meltzer, to the effect that Freud fumbled the ball. Reeve's explanation for Freud's failure to stick with the radical implications of his theory (that is, to abandon consistently a biological for a psychological criterion of sexual perversion) is nearly tautologous: Freud kept heterosexual genitality central because of “the influence [that] the sexual instinct still exert[ed] on his thought” (pp. 83-84). Invoking genealogy, situating Freud's collapse in the field of his Viennese/Victorian culture and his psychosocial biography, would have been more in the spirit of Reeve's own methodology.

6. If Reeve's proposal about sexual perversion (he alternates unpredictably between “perversion” and “perversity,” unlike Russell Vannoy, who prefers the latter and explains *why*) was a smashing success, it would be moot that he ignored the literature and did not bother to distinguish jealousy and envy analytically. Here is what he comes up with, the paragraph that is the heart and soul of his account of sexual perversion:

If, where love develops in us, envy exerts an overwhelming influence, we may be led to want not to destroy the things we love, but to sustain them in existence in order to compete enviously with them, and by doing so to reassure ourselves repeatedly that we do not need them or the good things (generosity, creativity, fullness of life, beauty) they have. In that case, our state of mind is in a genuine and intelligible sense perverse in its purpose, since it rejects whatever is good and alive, and aims instead “to create a world which is the negative of . . . the realm of good objects,” a world of “the life-less, for whom the great anxieties of the living, time-bound, cannot exist.”²² A married couple having missionary-position vaginal intercourse may be sexual perverts, whereas a sadomasochistic lesbian couple anally fisting each other may not be. Queerness is no guarantee of perversion; “heteronormativity” no safeguard against it. (pp. 84-85)

The two sentences after the superscript are right, once we take the psychological turn about sexual perversion, as Nagel reminded us back in 1969. Reeve is surely entitled to these claims, as soon as he separates, with Freud, the aim of the sexual instinct (or drive) from the object of the sexual instinct, which are only soldered together (*Three Essays*, vol. 7 of the *Standard Edition*, p. 148). Moreover, Reeve's announcement, which he seems to take as earth-shattering, that the sadomasochistic lesbians might not be perverted, and “queerness is no guarantee of perversion,” transmits stale news. The American Psychiatric Association (APA) thirty years ago de-centered genital heterosexuality. Since then, it has been grappling with formulating a coherent set of psychological criteria to employ in diagnosing sexualities as “paraphilias.” Sexual perversion, it has been widely agreed (excluding a traditional type of Vatican Catholicism), must be understood psychologically (*if at all*). In this regard Reeve lets us down. Why exactly might that straight couple be sexually perverted? He declines to explain. What is it about their sexual psychology, or their psychology as it exists in or is manifested by their sexual acts, that makes these people, as Reeve says, “sexual perverts”? (Scruton provides an answer to this extraordinary question—why

might a straight couple copulating in an ordinary way be perverted?—even if one not popular among sexual liberals.) For Reeve, when love and envy are mixed together in a certain way—“If, where love develops . . . envy exerts an overwhelming influence”—then “our state of mind is in a genuine and intelligible sense perverse.” Let's assume so. But what has this to do with the straight copulating couple? Are we to imagine that during the act, one or both has that state of mind? That seems merely to solder together artificially the sexual act and the perverse state of mind, because the couple might well have that state of mind before, after, and apart from their coitus. Should we imagine that in their sexual acts they compete enviously, or at least one is? Why in the bedroom? Not elsewhere? What features of envious competition pertain specifically to sexuality and make their acts *sexually* perverted? I don't get it. Do we proceed to say that the lesbian sadomasochists are *not* perverted because they *lack* that mixture of love and envy? Nagel, even if his Sartrean-Gricean account of sexual perversion fails to satisfy, saw that the defect had to reside in sexual psychology, not psychology *simpliciter*. And Scruton argued that sexual perversion turns on our moral-psychological attitudes toward, and our sexual perceptions of, each other in relation to our sexual activity. Otherwise we cannot say (Robert Gray's essay on perversion is relevant here) that we are confronted with a specifically *sexual* perversion. *X* might compete enviously (it may be granted, unconsciously) with *X*'s lover *Y* during “Jeopardy.” What type of pervert does that make *X*? Or for that half-hour is *X* simply being childish, petty, small minded? One-upmanship in bed (who is better in producing the other's orgasm?) seems not to be the stuff of sexual perversion. But what else could or does “compete enviously” mean? There is not a peep from Reeve about this. Empty psychological terms make for both bad psychology and bad philosophy.

In comparison with what Nagel and Scruton do with sexual perversion, Reeve's account is baroque. I was too quick to assume, above, that Reeve is on firm ground with “our state of mind is in a genuine and intelligible sense perverse.” It is not intelligible to me: I do not see how that (or any) state of mind “rejects *whatever* is good” (p. 85), nor can I fathom how it “create[s] a world” of “the life-less” (p. 85, from Meltzer). Both these locutions seem incompatible with, rather than extensions or implications of, Reeve's idea that our state of mind in relation to our beloveds is “to sustain them in existence in order to compete enviously with them.” At the culmination of his exposition, Reeve does not describe the mental state in his own words, but quotes Meltzer. Instead of Reeve's relying futilely on the obscure Meltzer to make Reeve's obscure meaning clear, it would have been better for Reeve, after quoting Meltzer, to have made *him* clear. Are we being given an account of perversion that Meltzer had already proposed, and not an original Reevean contribution? If so, Reeve's task was to explicate Meltzer's view helpfully and explain *why* this view, one he embraces, is superior to others, and why we should take it seriously. Just don't splash it as us and trust that, like Sponge Bob Square Pants, we will sop it up.

7. In order to answer these questions, and out of curiosity, I obtained (by interlibrary loan all the way from New Mexico; it is not a faddish book) Meltzer's *Sexual States of Mind* (1973), from which Reeve quotes. To some extent, Reeve presented Meltzer fairly and faithfully, but he also “deracinated” some of Meltzer's material.

Here, with my interpolations in brackets, is a fuller version of the passage Reeve relies on in laying out and completing his thoughts about sexual perversion (Meltzer, p. 92):

“Perversion” (that is, “characterised by perversity of purpose”) is a very apt term for the sexual states of mind [Meltzer realizes that we need to talk about *sexual* psychology]

engendered by the leadership . . . of this destructive [“sadistic”] part of the personality. . . [T]he destructiveness takes two forms. In the first instance it seeks to destroy these qualities [goodness, generosity, etc.]. But that is really too easy to afford much sadistic pleasure. [I hear Hegel and Sartre.] The great satisfaction is in envious competition [so Reeve's account is from top to bottom derived from Meltzer]. . . . Negativism . . . wills to create a world which is the negative of everything in nature [this bit of Sade was omitted by Reeve], in the realm of good objects. The impulses are therefore fundamentally anti-nature [more Sade, again omitted by Reeve; let's hope Meltzer means “anti-nature” in a non-Catholic sense, else he is an Aristotelian-Thomistic teleologist after all], and the world it seeks to build is the world of the life-less, for whom the great anxieties of the living, time-bound, cannot exist.

The emotive quality of sadistic perverse sexual states of mind is therefore basically manic. . . .

We cleared up a few things, but I'm still perplexed. “*Therefore . . . manic*”? How so? And does this imply “*Rx. Lithium, dosim repetatur.*”? It is clear, though, that no matter what else Meltzer is doing in this dense passage, he would like to conceive of sexual perversion in terms of *sexual* psychology; it must be about “the state of mind involved in the adult love relationship” (p. 65). He also clearly identifies sadomasochism as a core sexual perversion (say, sapphic anal fisting). The two sexual perversions Meltzer lists (p. 67) are:

- (a) Expressions of narcissistic organisation (sadomasochistic) [and]
- (b) Defenses against depressive anxieties (inverted object choice and zonal confusions).

Meltzer is straddling the fence. On the one hand, he rejects a straightforward biological criterion of sexual perversion. But when he applies his psychoanalytic criteria, the sexual proclivities that turn out to be sexually perverted (because they manifest pathological psychology) are the standard perversions: sadomasochism, “zonal confusions” about bodily orifices, appendages, and fluids, and “object choice inversion” (i.e., homosexuality; so much for “queerness is no guarantee . . .”). Meltzer's talk of “nature” and “anti-nature” might have given the game away. In the early to mid-20th Century, some psychologists wanted to retain the old Premodern notion of sexual perversion as activity contrary to nature's purposes, but they also wanted to understand “nature” (human nature, in particular) psychologically, in part to strip “perversion” and “perverted” of their moral (sinful) connotations and replace them with medical health judgments. What they came up with was the Meltzerian compromise: the extension of “sexual perversion” stays roughly the same, although the genesis and nature of perversion are accounted for psychologically (e.g., “defenses against anxiety”). Doing so takes the blame off the pervert's moral shoulders by ousting religion as the authority in these matters. Power over the discourse of sexuality, as Foucault would have put it, shifted from the cleric to the shrink. Later came the insurance billing code numbers of the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (most recent edition, DSM-IV-TR, 2000). Why Reeve aligned himself with a sexological movement roundly condemned by a genealogical Foucault is a minor mystery. Besides, “as you can tell” from what I quoted, nearly the whole of Meltzer's book is unreadable. The blind do follow the blind.

8. The title of *Love's Confusions* made me think that Reeve was going to construct an innovative inventory of the ways in which we (or some of us) think confusedly about love or of the various

ways in which our (but whose?) concept of love is confused. Then Reeve would straighten us out by solving the underlying philosophical problem or dispelling the confusions. Or, taking the title literally, I wondered whether Reeve would be investigating not confusions in how we think about and practice love but paradoxes in love itself (if the two can be separated).

Even though scattered through the book are myriad things we might call tensions, puzzles, oddities, tangles, or mysteries (the book begins with one, in an epigraph by the poet Fernando Pessoa [Portuguese; 1888-1935; pes' wä]: “A lover never knows what he loves, / Why he loves, or what love is”), the title turns out to be misleading: another reason for disappointment. The first chapter and bits of the second conduct a direct inquiry into how some people think in a confused way about love. But, after that, Reeve never provides us with a list of the various confusions he has in mind, so the reader has to be on his or her toes in distilling a rough catalogue from Reeve's often understated and cryptic prose. Paying that close attention, to do this analytic work on one's own, is tough business, especially while trying to read a book that tends to put one asleep.

9. Reeve's target in the first chapter is Christianity, and he deftly trips the Cyclops into tumbling down. In the last paragraph, Reeve claims that the Christian commandment, love thy neighbor as thyself, is “problematic.” Why?

For if we do not know what turns on [causes, begins, triggers, ignites] our love for others [Reeve is skeptical that we do, citing Montaigne and Octavio Paz; see also Pessoa], we do not know what turns on our self-love either, *and so* do not know how to love them as we do ourselves.” (p. 14, italics added)

It is, I submit, Reeve's logic that is puzzling, not Christianity. Since when does *X*'s knowing *how* to do something presuppose *X*'s knowing *why* *X* does it? In particular, *X*'s knowing how to love others—say, in part, how to do caring things for them—seems not to depend on *X*'s knowing why *X* is concerned for their well-being. The commandment admonishes *X* to do well for others, just as *X* would naturally, without admonition, do well for himself. That *X* has no clue (which is, anyway, false) why *X* does well for himself or why *X* extends himself to others in no way prevents *X* from following that imperative. Surely Reeve must admit that *X* may wish *Y* well for *Y*'s sake, yet have no knowledge why *X* does so. If something more subtle is going on that is packed into Reeve's “and so,” I regret that he didn't spell it out. Maybe Reeve is not offering an argument at all, but a theorem in psychology: if a person, any person, does not know why she loves herself, that mental deficiency will prevent her from knowing how to act lovingly toward others. That's armchairing it. Note also the questionable inference from “*X* does not know what makes *X* love *Y*” to “*X* does not know what makes *X* love *X*.” That's a nonstarter, unless we assume that all love is of a piece, that whatever is true of one type (or subject, or object) of love must also be true of every other type. (More on this below.)

10. In exposing the confusions or contradictions of Christianity, Reeve quotes in this chapter a well-known passage from Anders Nygren's monumental *Agape and Eros* (p. 78):

God doesn't love that which is already in itself worthy of love, but on the contrary, that which in itself has no worth acquires worth just by becoming the object of God's love.

Reeve remarks, “Theologically speaking, [this] is not a compelling idea” (p. 13). Pray tell, why

not? Reeve's argument begins with: "God cannot want value-conferring love [for himself, from humans], since he is already infinitely valuable" (p. 13). Now, because God does not want value-conferring love, "he must want value-responsive love [instead, for himself, from humans]. Apparently, then, value-responsive love is better, since God surely wants the best. . . . But that makes God seem a deficient lover—one who loves less well [i.e., in a value-conferring way] than he wants to be loved" (pp. 13-14).

The argument contains several mistakes. Reeve assumes—to begin the critique—that conferring value on *Y* necessarily means increasing *Y*'s value. That is false as a *general* account of what it is to "confer value" on something; hence we cannot conclude, as an instance, that to confer value on God is to increase God's value. Philosophers who discuss the notion that love is the conferring of value (including Frankfurt, whose book on love Reeve knows; see my review of *The Reasons of Love*, in this journal at www.humboldt.edu/~essays/soble2rev.html) do not claim that the value of the object is thereby necessarily increased "objectively" by conferring value. That *X* makes something valuable or important for *X* does not necessarily increase its "intrinsic" value, and to increase its "intrinsic" value is not what *X* was trying to do when conferring value on it (or not necessarily). Hence humans are not (yet) barred from loving God in the sense of conferring, say, their own "subjective" value on Him. Nor does it *follow from* the fact that God's conferring value on humans does increase their value *that* humans who in loving confer value must also be increasing the value of the objects or persons they love. There may well be a difference between the way (or extent to which) God confers value and the way humans do, which is rooted in the different natures of God and humans.

Further, from the fact that God is perfect, and hence has value that cannot be increased, it follows (even if it is granted that conferring value on *X* entails increasing the value of *X*) *only* that humans can't *succeed* in conferring value on God. It does not follow from the fact that His value cannot be increased that humans cannot love God in a value-conferring way, just because their love must fail to achieve its goal. God might have a good reason for wanting us to love Him in a necessarily futile but not, for that reason alone, a disastrous way. That humans nobly *try* to confer value on God might be the ticket for Him. These are the sort of technical subtleties chronically absent from *Love's Confusions*; their absence shows what happens when a philosopher abandons analytic methods. Why not say that humans love God in one way and God loves humans another way, and both are "best" in their respective domains? Why did Reeve fail to tell us about, for example, Nygren on Paul and *pistis* (*Agape and Eros*, pp. 126-30), as an attempt at a theologically adequate solution to the problem of the human love for God, and then show us why this approach might be wrong (if it is) or impotent to save Christianity? Didn't Reeve look deeper into *Agape and Eros*? (Another matter for psychoanalysis, not philosophy.) The topic of the human love for God has a long philosophical and theological history: St. Paul, St. Augustine, Abelard, St. Thomas Aquinas on *caritas*, . . . C. S. Lewis, Paul Tillich, Gene Outka. You would never know it from *Love's Confusions*, where the problem is brought up and then brushed off with a few tidy rhetorical questions. (Much of this history is narrated comprehensively by Irving Singer in *The Nature of Love*.)

11. Throughout this chapter Reeve assumes that any sense of love that fits God's love for humans must also fit human love for God, and vice versa. It is on this basis that he argues (p. 2) that if we assume that love is, in part at least, the doing of things that benefit the beloved, and God loves

humans in this sense, then this makes “our love for him mysterious. For how can any activity of ours . . . benefit someone whose very perfection puts him beyond benefit?” Reeve misunderstands, again, a general account of love and hence misapplies it to particular cases. I am not aware of any philosopher who claims that love must *succeed* in benefiting the beloved to *be* love. The analysis must be counterfactual, speaking about dispositions; for example, “X loves Y only if X would act to benefit Y if X could.” A person with few resources and undeveloped skills who nonetheless tries desperately to benefit his beloved may be quite adequately exhibiting a component of love. (In a Kierkegaard parable, an old impoverished woman gives a penny as charity. She benefited no one, but her heart and character were full of love.) In the case of God, no gap exists between the disposition and its fulfillment: “if X could” is always satisfied. (*Ergo* the problem of evil.)

Further, there is a “mystery” in Christianity, as Reeve claims there is, only if the human love for God must be the same as God's love for humans. The assumption might be true, but it goes unargued for. Much later, Reeve says something relevant: “in the face of love's confusions, we are tempted to divide and conquer. Sexual love, parental love, fraternal love, friendship, agape, love of country, love of sports” (pp. 86-87), and he could have added “God's love for humans” and “the human love for God.” Well, why not? A division between different sorts or senses of love sometimes seems to work: contrast X's love for X's child with X's love for the adult human being with whom X is currently having a romantic affair. Two different kinds of love, even if Reeve the psychoanalyst is right that both types develop from the infant-mother relationship, and even if we grant even more to the psychoanalysts, that X's love for X's child has a repressed and sublimated erotic stream. My love for my mother, my love for my child, my love of good books—these are different (phenomenologically and analytically), regardless of their common ancestry, origin, genealogy, history, what not. Reeve is having none of it: “Introduce enough distinctions, we think, and the confusions will all be resolved. But that supposes that these distinctions are not themselves manifestations of confusions and anxieties—that they are not, in part, defenses” (p. 87). Incredible. That's all we get by way of an “argument,” the psychoanalytic brush-off: my bringing up “different types” to show the weakness of Reeve's view is a “defense.” We have seen this trick before: your resisting analysis proves that you need it.

Reading this chapter, I wondered about Reeve's confidence while disposing of Christianity with a few well-trod conundrums. A veritable ton of literature about these problems exists, and Reeve cites virtually none of it. An exception is his use of Kierkegaard as a foil, an opponent he underestimates. Reeve describes himself in the preface as “white, agnostic, deracinated [plucked up by the roots from the United Kingdom to hillbilly North Carolina?], liberal, [and] financially secure” (p. vii)—a solid member of the academic bourgeoisie. Perhaps his agnosticism explains why he gives such short shrift to Christianity. Or his giving short shrift to Christianity explains his agnosticism. Like the Clairol woman, only his shrink knows for sure.

12. Nygren's claim, quoted by Reeve, is about love and value. Indeed, the relationship between (i) X's love, (ii) the value of that which X loves, and (iii) X's rationality or reasons, has been a central question in the philosophy of love since Plato and Paul and other ancients, up to contemporary writers, including Frankfurt. Reeve spends a page and a half on it (pp. 13-14). Here is part of his treatment of the issue:

Before we fall in love, we know what qualities we are looking for in a lover—or think we do. . . . Once we have fallen in love, it is a different story. When we are pressed to

explain why we love our lover, we usually have little to say except what Montaigne says: Because she's she; because I'm me. When it comes to explaining why we love, we are all tongue-tied. . . . Loved beings—like great works of art—resist paraphrase. Love, as a result, seems somehow groundless—and so somehow blind. (p. 13)

There is no deeper probing into the question than this. (For the record, this is what Montaigne wrote: “If you press me to tell you why I loved him [Etienne de La Boétie], I feel this cannot be expressed, except by answering: Because it was he, because it was I”; *The Complete Essays*, trans. D. M. Frame, p. 139.)

Instead of rambling aimlessly and impressionistically about the relationship between love, value, and reasons, Reeve would have done well to take a look at, and take into consideration, the well-known book by Scruton (*Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic*), in which he makes a distinction between “reason-based,” “reason-involving,” and “reason-hungry” emotions, and then applies this to love and desire (pp. 97-99, 233). In the Acknowledgments, Reeve thanks “Eight anonymous readers [who] introduced me to work I didn't know” (p. 199). Could it be that none of Reeve's eight readers knew enough about the philosophy of love and sex to send him to Scruton's extraordinary and unforgettable book? Or that Reeve had *never* come across it? Scruton does not make one appearance in *Love's Confusions*. Not only does Reeve slight Scruton in this context, but also other philosophers who have written less impressionistically about love, value, and reasons, and who have genuinely struggled with the problem (for example, see Roger Lamb's essay, in his collection *Love Analyzed*). Nor is there anything at all in *Love's Confusions* about the important work on love and sex done by Martha Nussbaum, Singer, Nagel, MacKinnon (who would have been especially relevant on pp. 133-34 and 143-44), and many other scholars (some are mentioned above) who have written about all of Reeve's topics. Most surprising is Reeve's ignoring Robert Solomon, because among the eight readers who told Reeve about books to read was his friend “in spades,” Paul Woodruff (p. 199)—who, for three decades by now, has been Solomon's colleague in the philosophy department at the University of Texas. More's the pity: Solomon's style and methodology are closer to Reeve's than are Scruton's.

Reeve—albeit deracinated (plucked out of his home in classical studies and beamed up to the philosophy of love and sex?)—still lives in a philosophical community. He speaks to it and it speaks to him. It cannot be ignored: he has no voice (no naturalization ceremony, no citizenship diploma) without it. It is his genealogy, and he is stuck with it.

13. Months ago, when I first came across advertising for *Love's Confusions*, which mentioned that in the book Reeve covered various types of love, sexual desire, jealousy, sexual perversion, as well as pornography and sadomasochism, I thought that that was a lot to do in one book. On receiving this miniature, beautifully manufactured book, and discovering that the text ran to only 177 pages, 30 lines per page, each page of text measuring 3 7/16 by 5 3/4 inches (in N'Awlins the roaches are—or were, pre-Katrina—bigger than that, and when I get my film developed at Walgreens, my prints stretch out to 4 x 6), I suspected that no topic would be handled in the depth expected from professional philosophers. Despite its small size, as I was reading I kept counting the number of pages I still had to plough through (once, and then again). I was bored. It seemed that these runty 177 pages were taking me forever to read. Much of this boredom—see Neu on the fascinating question whether it was really due to the book, or due only to me—came from the book's lack of

clear direction, lack of a thesis, and lack of (coherent) argumentation. Much of it had to do with the numerous, long passages that Reeve quoted from other writers. (Carlin Romano of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called it Reeve's "quotation binge.") And much of it had to do with Reeve's leading us to the brink of an encounter with something interesting, and then dropping it (and us) like a hot fried cheese stick, igniting the response, "So? Is that *it*?" Reeve quotes from Sally Tisdale's *Talk Dirty to Me*, which quotation occupies two-thirds of a page, and wraps it up with, "What turns us on, like what disgusts us, can show us something very detailed and particular about who we erotically are" (p. 133). That is true and is exactly what Tisdale says, very nicely on her own, in the quoted passage. It is also the mere *beginning* of our investigating pornography and sex, not an end point, for the observation is trite, even tautologous. Where do we go from here? In *Love's Confusions*, nowhere. (The breakfast cereal that turns you on says a lot about who you are. This thesis, by contrast, is not tautologous. You relish granola? Aha, you're a smoke-free health-nut who subscribes to *Mother Jones*. You prefer chocolate-coated sugar bombs? Oh, you poor overweight, undereducated dupe of capitalist Saturday morning television advertising.)

One of Reeve's eight readers, he informs us, "advised me not to publish this book under my own name!" (p. 199). Reeve doesn't tell us *why* he was so advised, even though the reader must have given a reason for his wild judgment. Why is Reeve so stingy, retentive? Why does he withhold the reason? Did he think it would be obvious to any reader of the book why he might be wisely reluctant to publish it *qua* his own? The scatology in *Love's Confusions* does not offend, nor does it besmirch the character, virtue, or manliness of its author. If we can, with equanimity, read Freud or Robert Nozick on anality (or "Sluts, Facials, Shitting," chap. 3 of my *Pornography, Sex, and Feminism*), we can easily digest Reeve on the "infantile, alimentary" body. Maybe the reader meant, "This *chatter* about love and sex doesn't hold a candle to your genuine work in ancient philosophy. Do not embarrass your name and the record of its scholarly achievements."

14. "[T]hough I write in the first person plural, I do so without presumption," declares Reeve in the preface (viii). His continual use of "we," however, is seductive (as any good analyst is). That two-letter word is difficult to read over and over again without falling into the trap of thinking that Reeve is speaking, or trying to speak, for everyone, or at least for everyone in the set "white, agnostic, liberal, financially secure." When Reeve wants to make it clear that "we" does include everyone, he resorts to the tag "all," as in "We are all amateurs—all *bricoleurs*—when it comes to love" (viii). True enough, and I admit it gladly: we repeat the same mistakes time and again, and at least in that sense we are amateurs when it comes to love and sex (even Don Giovanni with his 1,003 in Spain, Wilt Chamberlain with his reported 20,000 in California, and Kant with his zero in Königsberg). But it does not follow from this, nor is it true, that we are all *bricoleurs*, amateurs, tinkerers, or dilettantes in the philosophy of love and sex. *X* might be a rotten—clumsy, pushy, unappealing—trial lawyer (or a rotten lover in the same ways), but *X* might also be a brilliant philosopher of law. It is no excuse for writing an amateurish book on the philosophy of love and sex that "we all" are amateurs in love and sex. I cannot fathom the *raison d'être* for Harvard's loosing upon the reading public what amounts to another coffee table book (Reeve's personal "commonplace book" [viii]) about the world's two most exciting and argued topics.

15. "Chatterley" is misspelled in note 30 (p. 188). Contrary to the index, Wittgenstein is on p. 161, not p. 169. Reeve calls Nygren's book *Eros and Agape*, but the University of Chicago Press edition, which he cited, is *Agape and Eros*. Nygren's original title, in Swedish, is *Den kristna kärlekstanken*

genom tiderna.

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